

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMSAmendment to the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (currently amended). An e-mail system for use by a passenger in a vehicle, said passenger having access to a terminal, the e-mail system comprising:
a first server located on said vehicle, wherein said first server is configured to transport e-mail between said first server and said terminal;
a second server external to said vehicle, wherein said second server is configured to transport e-mail between said second server and a data network; and a communications system configured to operate in a plurality of wireless modes to thereby wirelessly transfer e-mail between said first server and said second server, wherein the plurality of wireless modes comprises an immediate mode and a batch mode, and wherein the wireless mode used to transfer email between the first server and the second server is selected to minimize the overall cost of operating the e-mail system.

Claim 2 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein: said communications system is configured to deliver an e-mail offer to said terminal; and said communications system is configured to selectively transfer e-mail messages to said first server based upon requests from said passenger in response to said e-mail offer.

Claim 3 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said e-mail offer comprises a subject header identifying an e-mail available for upload, an indication of who sent said e-mail, and a price for delivering said e-mail to said terminal.

Claim 4 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein: said terminal is a laptop computer configured with information identifying a home e-mail server; said communications system is further configured to route e-mail to and from said laptop computer through

said first server regardless of said laptop computer configuration; and said first server emulates said home e-mail server.

Claim 5 (original). The e-mail system of claim 4 wherein said second server is configured to periodically poll said home e-mail server for inbox messages.

Claim 6 (original). The e-mail system of claim 4 wherein said second server is configured to receive e-mail forwarded from said home e-mail server.

Claim 7 (original). The e-mail system of claim 4 wherein: said communications system is configured to deliver an e-mail offer to said terminal; and said communications system is configured to selectively transfer e-mail messages to said first server based upon requests from said passenger in response to said e-mail offer.

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Claims 8-9 (cancelled).

Claim 10 (currently amended). The e-mail system of ~~claim 9~~ claim 1 wherein:
said communications system ~~further comprises a mode selector is further~~
~~configured to select a-one of said plurality of wireless communication~~
~~mode from said first and second wireless communication modes based on~~
~~mode selection criteria; and~~
~~said communication system is further configured to initiate said selected wireless~~
~~communication mode to transfer an e-mail message.~~

Claim 11 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises an increase in data throughput.

Claim 12 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises an urgency of transferring an e-mail message.

Claim 13 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises a transmission cost associated with said wireless communication mode.

Claim 14 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises an amount a user is willing to pay.

Claim 15 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises a time since a last transfer of data.

Claim 16 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 further configured to determine when to initiate said communication modes, and configured to place e-mail data in a queue to be sent and received in batches when operating in the batch mode.

Claim 17 (original). The e-mail system of claim 16 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises the current amount of data accumulated in the queue.

Claim 18 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said plurality of wireless communication mode is gatalink modes comprises a data transfer via a satellite connection.

Claim 19 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said plurality of wireless communication mode is modes comprises a data transfer via a radio frequency based connection.

Claim 20 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 claim 18 wherein said plurality of wireless communication mode is satellite based modes further comprises a gatalink connection, and wherein the communication system is further configured to select between the gatalink connection and the satellite connection to thereby minimize overall cost of the e-mail system.

Claim 21 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said wireless communication mode transfers communication system is configured to transfer compressed data.

Claim 22 (currently amended). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said wireless communication mode transfers communication system is configured to transfer encrypted data.

Claim 23 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 further comprising a vehicle data network configured to transport an e-mail message between said terminal and said first server.

Claim 24 (original). The e-mail system of claim 23 where in said vehicle data network comprises a world wide web server.

Claim 25 (original). The e-mail system of claim 23 where in said vehicle data network comprises an e-mail server emulating an e-mail server identified by said passenger.

Claim 26 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein said terminal communicates with said first server via a modem interface unit.

Claim 27 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein said terminal communicates with said first server via an in-flight entertainment system.

Claim 28 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein said terminal communicates with said first server via a wireless interface unit.

Claim 29 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a kiosk.

Claim 30 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a laptop computer.

Claim 31 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a keyboard.

Claim 32 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a palm pilot.

Claim 33 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said second server is further configured to provide e-mail accounts for said users.

Claim 34 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said vehicle is an airplane.

Claim 35 (currently amended). A method of transporting e-mail messages between a data network and a terminal on a vehicle, the method comprising, the steps of:

~~transporting receiving a message between from a terminal on said vehicle and at a first server on said vehicle;~~

~~selecting one of a plurality of communications modes for the message, wherein the plurality of communications modes comprises a batch mode and an immediate mode, and wherein the intermediate mode is selected if the message is an urgent message;~~

~~establishing a data connection between said first server and a second server, wherein said second server is located on said data network and external to said vehicle; and~~

~~transporting e-mail between said first server and said second server via a wireless connection using the selected one of the plurality of communications modes;~~

~~transporting e-mail between said second server and a data network.~~

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Claims 36-38 (cancelled).

Claim 39 (currently amended). The method of claim 38 wherein: ~~claim 35 wherein~~ said selecting step further comprises ~~determining the selected one of the plurality of communications modes based upon mode selection criteria the step of selecting a wireless communication~~

~~mode from said first and second wireless communication modes based on mode selection criteria; and said establishing step further comprises the step of initiating said selected wireless communication mode.~~

Claim 40 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection mode criteria comprises reducing cost and increasing data throughput.

Claim 41 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is an urgency of the message.

Claim 42 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is an amount of data accumulated in the queue.

Claim 43 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is a cost of said wireless communication mode.

Claim 44 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is an amount said user is willing to pay.

Claim 45 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is a time since last communication.

Claim 46 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said establishing step further comprises the step of determining when to initiate said communication mode.

Claim 47 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said establishing step further comprises the step of queuing data for sending and receiving in batches.

Claim 48 (currently amended). The method of claim 35 wherein said step of transporting e-mail between said second server and a data network further comprises an e-mail retrieval step wherein an e-mail message is transmitted to said second server.

Claim 49 (original). The method of claim 48 wherein said e-mail retrieval step further comprises the step of polling a home e-mail server by said second server and retrieving said e-mail message from said home e-mail service.

Claim 50 (original). The method of claim 48 wherein said e-mail retrieval step further comprises said second server receiving e-mail forwarded from a home e-mail server.

Claim 51 (original). The method of claim 48 further comprising the step of establishing an e-mail account for said user.

Claim 52 (original). The method of claim 51 further comprising the step of receiving an e-mail message sent to said e-mail account.

Claim 53 (original). The method of claim 48 wherein said step of transporting e-mail between said second server and said first server further comprises: the step of providing an e-mail offer to said terminal; the step of receiving a request to upload a selected e-mail message; and the step of providing said requested e-mail message to said terminal.

Claim 54 (original). The method of claim 53 wherein said step of providing said e-mail offer further comprises the step of providing a subject header identifying an e-mail available for upload, an indication of who sent said e-mail, and a price for delivering said e-mail to said terminal.

Claim 55 (currently amended). The method of claim 39 wherein said data connection is a satellite connection wireless communication mode is gatelink.

Claim 56 (currently amended). The method of claim 39 wherein said data connection wireless communication mode is radio based.

Claim 57 (currently amended). The method of claim 39 wherein said data connection is selected between a satellite based connection and a gatelink connection as a function of the selected one of the plurality of communications modes ~~wireless communication mode is satellite based.~~

Claim 58 (currently amended). The method of claim 39 wherein said wireless communication message is compressed.

Claim 59 (currently amended). The method of claim 39 wherein said wireless communication message is encrypted.

Claim 60 (original). The method of claim 35 further comprising the steps of:
said first server receiving information identifying a home e-mail server from said terminal, wherein said terminal is a laptop computer;
directing said laptop to said first server regardless of said identifying information;
and
said first server emulating said home e-mail server.

Claim 61 (original). The method of claim 35 wherein said step of transporting a message between said terminal and said first server further comprises transporting said message via a vehicle data network comprising a world wide web server.

Claim 62 (original). The method of claim 35 wherein said step of transporting a message between said terminal and said first server further comprises transporting said message via a vehicle data network comprising an e-mail server emulating an e-mail server identified by said terminal.

Claim 63 (original). The method of claim 35 further comprising the step of communicating between said terminal and said first server via at least one of the following: a modem interface unit, an in-flight entertainment system, a wireless interface unit; and a kiosk.

Claim 64 (original). A digital storage medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon, wherein said computer-executable instructions are operable to execute the method of claim 39.

Claim 65 (original). A digital storage medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon, wherein said computer-executable instructions are operable to execute the method of claim 53.

Claim 66 (currently amended). A digital storage medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon, wherein said computer-executable instructions are operable to execute the method of claim 60 claim 35.

Claim 67 (new). A method of transferring an email message from an airborne server to a terrestrial server, the method comprising the steps of:

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receiving the email message from a user;
parsing the email message to determine a sending priority;
selecting one of a plurality of transfer modes for sending the email as a function of the sending priority, wherein the plurality of transfer modes comprises an immediate mode and a batch mode; and
transmitting the email message using the immediate mode if the sending priority is high, and otherwise transmitting the email message using the batch mode to thereby minimize the cost of transferring the message.

68 (new). The method of claim 69 further comprising the step of charging a fee to the user for transferring the email message, wherein the fee for using the immediate mode is greater than the fee for using the batch mode.